

SF DCCC Candidate Questionnaire

Board of Education

Name John Trasviña

Address 5150 Diamond Heights Blvd., #202B

City, State, Zip San Francisco, CA 94131

Campaign Phone Number 650-714-4587

Cell Phone Number

E-mail Address John@JohnForSF.com

Are you a registered member of the Democratic Party? Yes

Have you read the California Democratic Party Platform? Yes

Will you fight for its implementation in policies? Yes

What office are you running for? San Francisco Board of Education

Are you running for re-election? No

What other elected positions have you held previously? None

---

INSTRUCTIONS:

· Please complete this questionnaire and bring 5 copies (for the 31 Committee members and for Democratic Clubs) with you to be distributed just prior to your interview appointment on August 18, 2018

· **\*\*IMPORTANT\*\*** Please send electronic copies to [info@SFDemocrats.org](mailto:info@SFDemocrats.org) by 5:00 PM on August 13, 2018

· With the possible exception of a Democratic candidate filing to run after the questionnaire due date, only candidates who return a completed questionnaire electronically by the due date will be allowed to present before the committee.

3

· At the time of the interview, you may also provide 45 copies of up to 4 pages of supplemental information attached to your questionnaire for distribution to SFDCCC members (materials are not to be passed out during the meeting).

· We may distribute the questionnaires in preparation for event and post them on the SFDCCC website for the public to view.

· If you have not heard from the committee by Thursday, August 16, please contact Executive Director, Adam Mehis at 415-626-1161 or [info@sfdemocrats.org](mailto:info@sfdemocrats.org) to schedule a time slot during the Endorsement Interview Meeting.

PART I: GENERAL QUESTIONS (200 words or less)

Why are you committed to serving on the School Board? What stake do you have in decisions made at the School Board (e.g. parent, student, educator, etc.)?

I'm running because we are a world-class city and our students, all of them, deserve a world-class education. I'm grateful for the education my teachers at Commodore Sloat, Aptos and Lowell provided to prepare me for a career in public service, civil rights and education. We are not providing that today, especially for African American and Latino children. I am the only candidate calling for a Latino Education Initiative. We cannot strengthen our schools without

well qualified, reliable educators and staff who well represent students of the SFUSD. We need to attract and retain such teachers through protecting their due process rights, making compensation more competitive with suburban districts through implementing Proposition G and providing for educator housing. We all have a stake in San Francisco's 21st century children. I have taught in the classroom and been Dean of USF Law School so I know my way around education.

Please describe your contributions to the Democratic Party and/or increasing civic engagement in the democratic process at the local, state and or/national level in the most recent years.

I've worked on Democratic party campaigns since the 1960s and come from a union family. I walked on the first SF teachers picket line in 1968 with my mother who was one of the first bilingual education teachers in the SF junior highs. Since then, I have worked on countless campaigns here and nationally and was Democratic counsel to the US Senate Judiciary Committee for Sen Paul Simon of Illinois. Among other things, I was the lead Senate counsel on renewal of the Voting Rights Act in 1992. I was the highest ranking Latino attorney in the Clinton Administration Justice Department when he appointed me Special Counsel for Immigration Related Unfair Employment. President Obama appointed me to be his HUD Assistant Secretary for Fair Housing & Equal Opportunity. I've been a member of over a dozen local Democratic clubs and donated to Democrats nationwide. I chaired the Voting Rights Subcommittee on the SF Citizens Advisory Committee on Elections and later served as Vice Chair of the SF Board of Supervisors Redistricting Task Force and as the School Board's representative on the Elections Commission. I supported non-citizen voting in the early 2000s when it failed and in 2016 when it passed.

Are there any other civic causes or organizations that you are involved with?

Vice Chair, California Law (pipeline for diversity in the legal profession starting with High School Law academies and 28 community colleges)

Director, US Senator Paul Simon Public Policy Institute, Southern Illinois University

Director, 1990 Institute (educate youth in US and China about respective societies in the 21st century)

President, Lowell High School Alumni Association

.

Please summarize your qualifications and experience for the office you are seeking.

In this race, I have the unique combination of civil rights advocacy, teaching, and educational management and both local and national experience to be an effective fighter for education for all from the start.

I was one of the first student representatives ever on the SF School Board when I was a student at Lowell High School and I was appointed to the Superintendent's Affirmative Action Review Committee. Later, I testified in Congress and advocated for bilingual education and against

changes to the Higher Education Act that would have deprived San Francisco of funding because of race. I helped oversee a Parent School Partnership program in collaboration with MALDEF (when I was its president/general counsel), the Urban League and the Asian Pacific American Legal Center. I have established public policy scholarships and internships for young people of color to spend summers in Washington DC and supported the Eddie/Gwen Award (named after a murdered transgender student in the East Bay) for a law student to work on issues of importance to the Latino and LGBT communities. As Dean of USF Law School, I worked to continue our accreditation, create and expand our Immigration Law Clinic and Racial Justice Clinic and make us the second most diverse law school in the nation. I have the education management and budget skills to hold school district administrators accountable as effective Board members should do and the leadership orientation to bring together stakeholders for change.

Housing and immigration are two essential issues facing our city. I led the Obama Administration agenda on fair housing and the Clinton Administration agenda on immigrant workplace rights. Being sensitive to and knowledgeable about both issues is something we should look for in our Board of Education members and I have those attributes. Just as I have stood up with the power of the federal government on behalf of immigrant housekeepers, meat packing plant workers and laborers and against discriminatory landlords, mortgage lenders and developers, I will advocate for our children and our future on the Board of Education.

Please list any organizations or elected officials who have endorsed you.

US Senator Dianne Feinstein  
Leader Nancy Pelosi  
DCCC Chair David Campos  
Assembly Member David Chiu  
Assembly Member Phil Ting  
DCCC Vice Chair Petra de Jesus  
District Attorney George Gascon  
Supervisor Katy Tang  
Community College Trustee Shanell Williams  
Past Democratic Party Chair Linda Post  
Past Democratic Party Chair Jane Morrison  
Former Supervisor John Molinari  
Former Supervisor Carol Ruth Silver

If you are elected, what are your top concerns? How would you address these concerns?

I have four top concerns. To obtain quality education for San Francisco's children, we must engage parents and the community, support our teachers, address critical gaps and stand for excellence.

- Engage Parents: The enrollment system discourages parents from getting involved in their children's education. It is difficult to navigate. I would follow the approaches taken by other districts, such as Boston and Seattle, that take the initiative to educate parents about the process in language and languages they understand and make it easier for parents to visit schools and submit applications. I have always strongly advocated bilingual services but simply translating something that is not understandable in English doesn't make it any more understandable in Spanish or Chinese. The end result of this system finds too many students assigned away from their neighborhoods and thus making it difficult for parents to organize and to have meaningful constant communication with their children's teachers. Moreover, kids lack a strong support base when they attend school without the friends they play with in the neighborhood. This is a problem that cuts across all lines.
- Support our Teachers: At the cornerstone of our public education system is the expertise of the classroom teacher supported by administrators and the community. In order to support them, we need to attract and retain quality teachers that better mirror the demographics of our city and student body. I will use my housing experience gained from HUD to work with the city for workforce housing for educators. I will start by calling upon each supervisor to identify an underutilized parcel in their district that can be repurposed for teacher housing. It is unconscionable that one-third of our teachers have to commute from out of town -- some up to 90 minutes before they step in front of the classroom. They can't be the teachers they trained or want to be. I will work for teacher housing especially teachers who will commit to staying for a number of years.
- Address critical gaps: I will establish a Latino Education Initiative modeled after the District's African American Achievement and Leadership Initiative (AAALI). Fully 26% of SFUSD students are Latino or Latina and face substantial gaps in English Language Learner reclassification and grade level achievement in mathematics. These gaps are at schools where Latino students are concentrated as well as where they are not. We must have constant attention and significant resources devoted to improving these outcomes. That includes providing professional development opportunities for teachers to gain cultural sensitivity, more acute recruiting of teachers of color and utilizing trusted community organizations to reach parents.
- Stand for Excellence: We can close the achievement gap without reducing opportunities for students who already do well academically. Restricting access to Algebra until a student reaches high school is the wrong message to college admissions officers and the future employers of SFUSD students. I am not convinced by the SFUSD's first-year results and defense of delaying Algebra instruction to high school. We must be able to offer programs so that all children can reach their potential after graduation.

The California Democratic Party Platform mentions building health, livable, and sustainable communities, what does this mean to you?

This is exactly what I was a leader on in the Obama Administration with HUD Secretary Shaun Donovan. A ZIP code should not predict the life outcomes of any child. Healthy, livable and

sustainable communities were the backbone of fair housing and require the collaboration of educators, health professionals, city planners, environmental and transportation professionals. More significantly, it requires intentional decision-making, community input and oversight at the local, state and federal levels. We supported combining community assets, eliminating food deserts, and ensuring that the dollars spent for job creation and training be made available to the residents themselves. Siting of new housing should be made with a commitment to reduce segregation, protect the environment, reduce commute times and keep families intact.

Would you support the idea of school districts using local accountability plans to grant funds to reach students with the greatest needs for whom they are most needed? Why or why not?

Yes. I support the measures to target aid to students who need it the most. I would support strong community input and civil rights accountability to make sure that there was a broad but common understanding of "need." I have less concern about the distribution of funds than I do with the amount. We need to reform Proposition 13. I support the statewide initiative to adjust taxation on industrial and commercial property. When we are successful, this proposition will bring in \$4.4 billion annually for school districts and community colleges

## PART II: YES/NO QUESTIONS

4

While it may seem that some of these questions do not apply to the office you are seeking, they represent California Democratic Party Platform principles and since many people run for higher office where they will be called upon to answer these questions, we would like them addressed.

### ECONOMIC JUSTICE

Do you support the divestment of public funds from Wells Fargo and other financial institutions involved in speculative and questionable banking practices?

Yes

Do you believe that the government should provide foreclosure relief for borrowers who were victims of unethical financial service practices?

Yes

Do you support the creation of a local municipal bank in San Francisco?

Yes

### CRIMINAL JUSTICE/POLICE REFORM

Do you support overhauling the bail system?

Yes

Do you believe in ending mass incarceration and supporting the abolishment of capital punishment?

Yes

Do you support using jails as mental health facilities and substance abuse treatment programs?

Yes, if you mean providing such services to people in jail.

No, if you mean jailing people in order to get such services.

5

Will you commit to encouraging "ban the box" to ensure that those formerly incarcerated are

given an equal opportunity for housing and employment?

Yes

Do you support the San Francisco Police Department being equipped with Tasers?

Yes

#### CHILDCARE

Do you support expanding affordable childcare to low- and middle-income families?

Yes

Do you support expanding child care to include children aged 0-3 years old?

Yes

#### EDUCATION

Do you believe in a “debt-free college” and free community college (i.e. Education financed entirely without student loans)?

Yes

Would you support the idea of school districts using local accountability plans to grant funds to reach students with the greatest needs for whom they are most needed? (9)

Yes

Do you support that teachers and professional staff deserve commensurate wages?

Yes

#### ENVIRONMENT

6

Do you oppose new fossil fuel infrastructure projects and supporting the divestment of fossil fuels?

Yes

Do you believe in Free MUNI for youth?

Yes

Do you support the Safe Routes to Schools program?

Yes

#### HEALTHCARE

Do you support a publicly funded single payer health care system for all people?

Yes

Should SFUSD expand Healthcare Centers to all high schools?

Yes

Do you support that all students have access to safe and reliable reproductive services and information without their spouse, judicial, parental, or guardian consent?

Yes

#### CIVIL RIGHTS AND IMMIGRATION JUSTICE ISSUES

Will you work to implement full Ethnic Studies courses and language immersion?

Yes

Will you support Sanctuary policies and Due Process for All -- limiting the ability for local authorities to collaborate with Federal government on immigration enforcement which incites fear in immigrant communities?

7

Yes

Do you support speaking out in public against all forms of racism, discrimination, hatred and violence and support standing in solidarity with movements that promote equity, including Black Lives Matter?

Yes

Will you protect the right of all people to use facilities and participate in all aspects of society regardless of their gender identity and the gender assigned at birth?

Yes

LABOR

Will you support the push for a statewide minimum wage for at least \$15 per hour and living wages for areas that have high cost of living?

Yes

Do you support that teachers and professional staff deserve commensurate wages?

Yes

Do you support paid parental leave for school educators?

Yes

CAMPAIGN FINANCE REFORM

Do you support full disclosure of funding sources for political advertisements?

Yes

Do you support full disclosure of funding sources for political advertisements?

Yes

8

HOUSING, TENANT, & LAND USE ISSUES

Do you believe that housing is a human right?

Yes

Do you believe the split roll for Proposition 13 that treats taxes for commercial and residential property differently?

Yes

Would you support repealing Costa Hawkins and the Ellis Act?

Yes

Do you support use of SFUSD property to build affordable housing?

Yes

Have you read the California Democratic Party Platform?

Yes

Will you fight for its implementation in policies?

Yes

PART III: SHORT-ANSWER QUESTIONS ON ISSUES (250 words or less)

1) What programs or initiatives would you undertake to address the educational disparities for SFUSD students?

I am the only candidate calling for a Latino Education Initiative modeled on the African American Achievement & Learning Initiative (AAALI) to provide intense focus on the need to improve educational outcomes for the 26% of the students who are Latino. I support this year's expansion of AAALI. I would put more focus onto the PreK-Grade 6 sector and not start with

high schoolers (as AAALI does). The Initiative would have a strong community base but should be housed within the School District in order to promote compliance with civil rights and other requirements and to make it easier for the Board members to hold decision-makers accountable. The initiative would emphasize collaboration with libraries, child care and rec/park facilities to ensure engagement before school starts as well while children are in school.

2) What would be your budget priorities for the School District?

The largest categories of expense in any budget are salaries and benefits of personnel. Without adequately paying our teachers, we will lose them. Without educators having a place to live in some proximity to a school, they cannot be the effective teacher they trained or want to be. I would call on every supervisor to find an underutilized parcel in their district to devote to workforce housing. In terms of programming, I support fuller funding of childcare and expansion of arts and language education. Finally, to the extent it calls for additional appropriations, I would support funding for restoring Algebra to 8th grade.

3) Do you believe that SFUSD's school assignment system needs reform? If not, why? If so, how would you change it?

Yes, it needs reform. I have discussed this elsewhere in the questionnaire. It needs greater transparency. Right now, it is a tremendous source of frustration for parents. The ones who can afford it leave the district (and sometimes San Francisco altogether) because of the assignment system while other parents who cannot afford to leave remain equally frustrated and disengaged with their children's education. I would delay the deadline to give parents more opportunities to visit schools and make it easier for low-income and working parents to file the paperwork. I would make neighborhood assignment easier to achieve dependent upon a comprehensive and achievable city-wide commitment to establish high quality schools in every neighborhood.

4) What is your belief on Common Core Standards? In recent years, there has been controversy that the new methodology is placing some students at a disadvantage for high achievement and college preparation. How would you address this concern?

Teachers are experts about what goes on in the classroom. Common Core establishes what students should know and master but it does not dictate how it should be taught. Some methodologies tend to have the disadvantages of "teaching to the test" and failing to allow room for our public schools to fulfill their responsibility to educate citizens in our democracy. I would address the concerns about disadvantages associated with Common Core by learning and listening from teachers, parents and students and working together to raise the educational performance of our students.

5) What do you think are the factors attributing to the teacher shortage in SFUSD? How would you address this?

We have a teacher shortage of approximately 100,000 nationwide. Beyond the numbers, we need more diverse teachers and training for culturally sensitivity and understanding. San Francisco continues to offer salaries that are not as high as suburban districts and, of course, as discussed elsewhere in this questionnaire, the cost of housing is prohibitive for teachers and paraeducators to live here. I support implementation of Proposition G for educators as well as passage of the statewide initiative to split out commercial and industrial property tax rolls to fund education.

We also have a teacher shortage because it is a difficult job and teachers do not always get the respect and support they deserve. There are many non-economic job enhancements that will enable SFUSD to retain our teachers.

6) What is your perspective about charter schools and their role in San Francisco? How would you advocate differently than SFUSD's current policies?

We are a public school nation. I disagree with the central proposition, as stated by charter proponents themselves, that the key to a good school is the principal's ability to select, retain and remove teachers. As the Dean of USF Law School, I worked closely with our union on many past and present labor matters. We worked collaboratively to address systemic issues and it did not require undoing workplace rules. I also question allowing charter schools to have undue discretion when it comes to teaching students with special needs.

I would closely scrutinize applications for new charters and renewals. I support clarifying state law to permit school districts to take into account the fiscal impact a charter will have on the district's ability to serve all remaining children.

7) Do you support the Safe and Supportive Schools Policy at SFUSD? How would you further these goals as a School Board member?

I strongly support this policy. Disparities in suspension rates are extraordinarily high and often unjustified. The Board passed a good policy but the key is whether the District has the guidance and resources to carry it out. This is an example where my policy, budget and management experience enable me to be an effective Board member when it comes to overseeing implementation of a new policy.

I would support teacher training so they can better understand what might be perceived as "teacher defiance", the number one reason given for student misconduct charges. Particularly when we have immigrant students traumatized by the anti-immigrant policies nationwide, we can expect a difficult transition into the norms of public school. I would fund training for teachers and support for students so that the first option is care, not suspension.

8) What role do you feel the Board of Education should play in sexual harassment and

assault cases involving students? If elected, how will you address this concern?

Sexual harassment and assault have no place in our public schools or society. In general, I would use my state and national networks from my past advocacy to make sure that our School Board is active in Great City Schools and other networks of urban school districts in order for us to be able to trade and learn from best practices. We should not hesitate to be a national leader if others are not getting it right. On these issues, I would work with counsel to make sure that students, faculty, parents and staff understand what their rights and responsibilities are regarding sexual harassment and assault. A student victim should not suffer in silence. A student defendant has due process rights that must be recognized. We must educate all students to respect each other and treat each other kindly. .

9) There is a perception that parent-led fundraising has widened the educational inequality gap among schools. What are your thoughts on this issue and how would you address distribution of school funds districtwide?

I support the categorical targeting of funds under Title I, students with special needs and other programs. I would address the perception by providing sunlight into the reality. Rather than discourage parents at a school from supporting their school, I would encourage them to make sure that all students at that school are served. This is what we have done at Lowell to provide for funding support for low-income students taking AP examinations and making programs accessible to students without regard to their or their parents' ability to pay.

I would also look for ways to expand alumni support for schools. Alums are an untapped source of support and can be an effective way to reduce perceptions of disparity.

10) What role do you believe SFUSD should play in the City's housing crisis? How would you address the needs of homeless or underhoused students and their families?

I strongly support the BuenaVista/HoraceMann initiative for providing evening shelter. Schools can be true community centers and can be considered safe ground for youth. We have an especially challenging time with homeless LGBT youth who have been kicked out by their families. Schools stepping in, either with housing or basic living needs for students and their families, can be life-saving.

11) Beyond reforming school assignment program, what do you see as the greatest barriers or major issues for families and youth getting to school safely while reducing traffic Congestion?

Better alignment of transit lines with school enrollment patterns; encouraging kids to walk together "human buses"; street cleanliness and safety.